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Watchdog Board for the CIA

Few men have worked so hard to get into so much trouble as President Kennedy did in going after his high office. And Cuba and Laos are only two of several places the Red powers have mined and can explode.

There are Berlin and Chiang Kai-shek's islands off the shore of Red China. Large chunks of free Asia and of Africa have fuses leading to the Communist capitals.

Mr. Kennedy sorely needs the best inside information on these peril spots that a keen, smooth-operating spy organization can give him. The Russians are masters in this stealthy maneuver.

Apparently our set-up for this purpose, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) came off poorly in Fidel Castro's crushing of the Cuban invasion. Why it did, who was to blame, are questions which no outsider has the knowledge to answer.

It is enough that President Kennedy believes the CIA must have better supervision. He has revived a Watchdog Board which President Eisenhower established in 1956, but which later seems to have gone to seed.

Meanwhile, this board will make a study of the CIA and of other intelligence-gathering units in the military and state departments.

As we see it, the worst effects of the Cuban affair are not the chestiness it gives to Castro and his fatheaded idolizers elsewhere in Latin America. A more serious backfire has been the greater Red boldness in Laos.

Another, maybe worse, is the doubts among our allies about our assessments of Red intentions and strength. They are bound to have a feeling that if we were so mistaken about Cuba, right at our door, we may be off the beam in measuring remote Red intentions and strength.

The CIA must have much freedom. If such organizations have in other countries. But it also must be responsible to the President. Its "cloak and dagger" work must be related through him to State Department policies and to our military capabilities. This cannot be done too soon.